



Ritu's Letter



Dear Mani,

I'm writing to you from Nagarhole National Park. Guess, what happened last night! I saw a blue tiger outside our window and it had the strangest look on its face. It seemed as if it was laughing! Yes, dear cousin brother, I think it was laughing at me. May be it was having a good chuckle at the blue tigers printed all over my pyjamas and top!

First I got scared seeing a tiger so close to me but then something in his expressions made me stop and I looked intently. He seemed a little bored. Slowly, gaining confidence that I would not run away from him, he pointed to something in my hands.

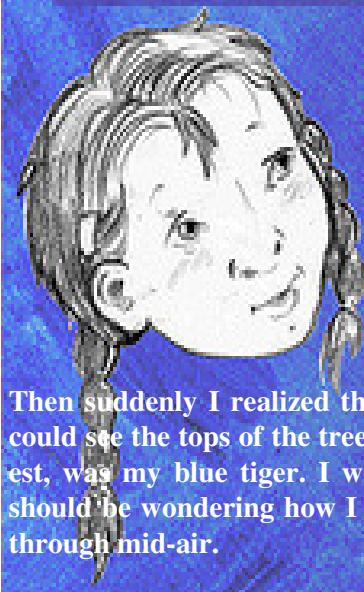
I looked down to see what he was pointing at. All I had in my hands was a juicy, ripe mango - well half of it. I was wondering what my options were: - Offer the mango as a truce to the blue tiger or Throw the half mango in the other direction and hope the tiger would run for it or Relish the mango myself before I get relished!!!!



Just as I was churning these various options over in my head, I heard a voice from inside the house. "Ritu, what are you doing? Why are you not in bed yet?" It was my mother calling. "Coming Ma!" I called out softly, and turned again towards the blue tiger, hoping he hadn't been scared off. But there he still was, and it looked like he was smiling! I called back, "Come and see!!!! A blue tiger has jumped out of my pyjama suit and is outside the window!"

And almost immediately I heard a roar from the jungle outside. I think it was the tiger's mother calling. Oh no! If the tiger followed its mother back into the jungle, then MY mother would never believe there was a BLUE tiger at the window! I quickly thought of a way to make it stay till Ma came.

It was the turn of my half Mango to play the role of a HERO now. I smiled a bit & lured the BLUE tiger by showing him the mango cajoling him to eat it. "Come here big cat! And I will give you this entire sweet, juicy mango", I said. As I stretched out my hand to him, the blue tiger roared the biggest roar I have ever heard in my life. I screamed for my mother and shrank away from the window. The mango dropped out of my hand, spreading bright yellow squash over the floor.



It turned into bright yellow light which spread and spread till nothing else was to be seen. I felt as if I was floating. Then suddenly I was no longer standing in my own house. "Where am I?" I wondered, looking all around me.

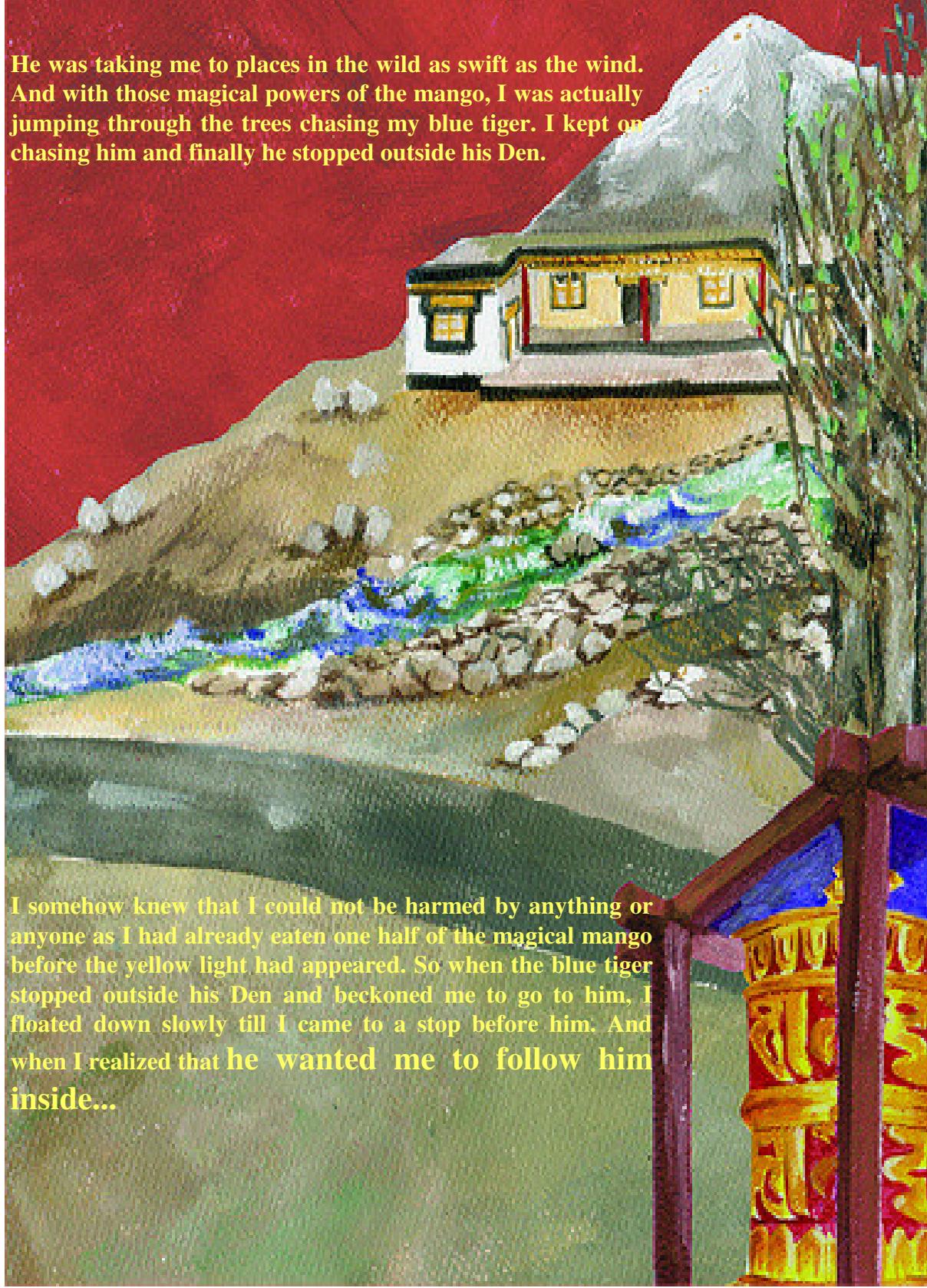
Then suddenly I realized that I could see the tops of the trees, below me. And there running away through the dark green forest, was my blue tiger. I wondered where it was running off to and then I thought, that I should be wondering how I was managing to float through mid-air.

Had the mango been magical?



My Blue Tiger had managed to give me a piggy back along with the mango which he had caught in its mouth. Its joy knew no bounds & it jumped all around.

He was taking me to places in the wild as swift as the wind. And with those magical powers of the mango, I was actually jumping through the trees chasing my blue tiger. I kept on chasing him and finally he stopped outside his Den.

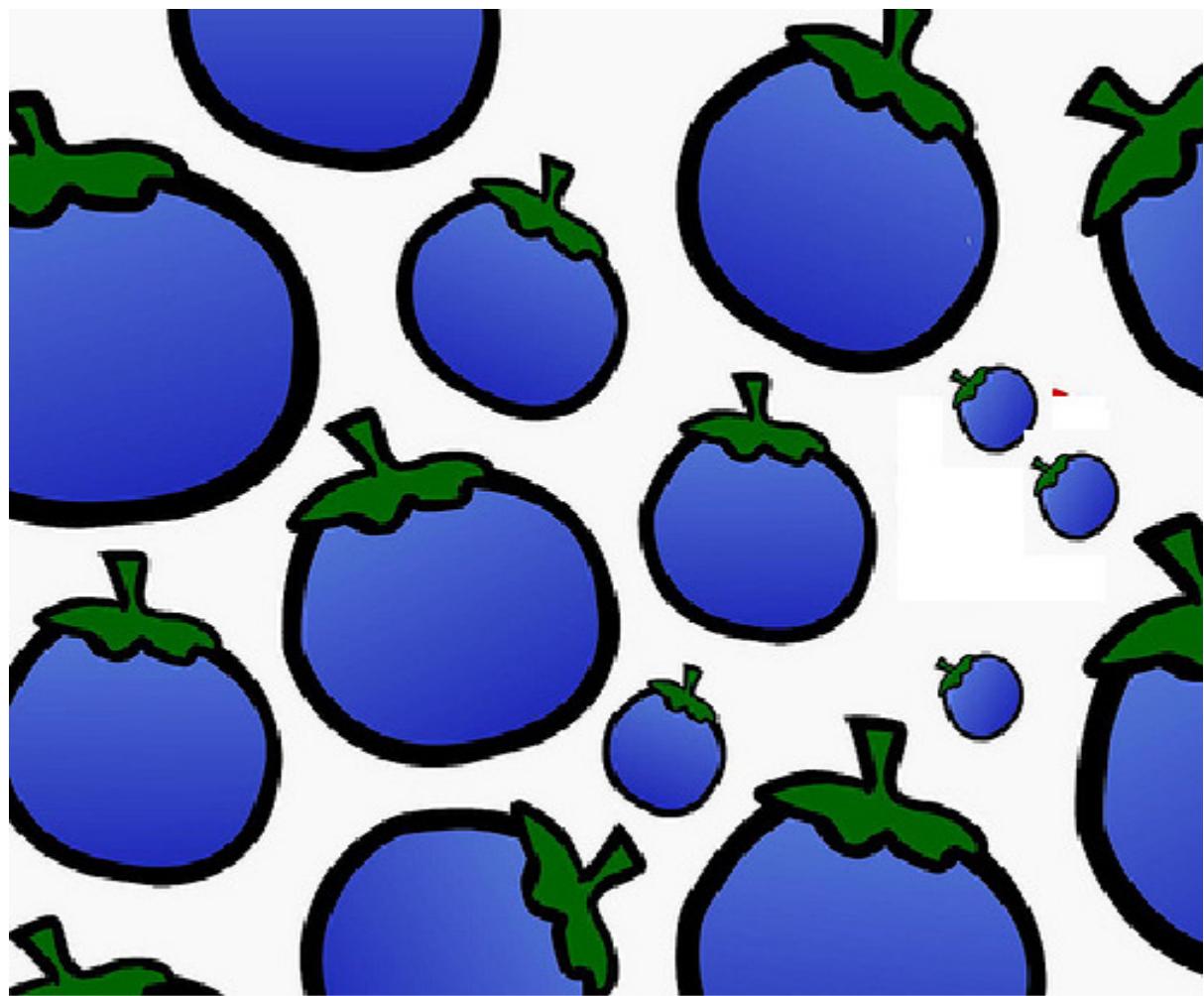


As I walked closer to the Blue Tiger's den, I saw why he was smiling - it was filled with blue mangoes of all sizes and all shades of blue. "Wow!" I said to myself, forgetting for a moment that I was standing next to a tiger, "The House of Blue Mangoes! What a story this is going to be when I meet Preeti and Vinita!". I stepped inside the cave slowly, watching my every step. The tiger was helping me finding the way. Inside, when I reached, I saw other tigers waiting for me. I was scared. "Will they eat me? I thought.

The Blue eyed Tigers & their cubs were as friendly as my buddies. They licked me & tried to play with me making me comfortable in their den. They shook the trees hard enough for the mangoes to fall & I took them all. I placed all the mangoes in my pouch so that I could share them with my friends & family back home. "Awwww what all magical powers will these mangoes give to my friends when they eat them all", I wondered.

It was quite amazing that I had found a magical tiger and a magical mango. Magical tiger can tell endless stories and a magical mango's juice doesn't end..That's like a good friend and yummy food...Wow, I don't have to get bored or stay hungry. But enough about that, I'll tell you the rest when you arrive, and I can't wait for your visit!

And then I realized that I was so far, far away from home, family and friends. I remembered seeing my mother rush into my room when I had screamed. "Can we go back to my house now, Blue Tiger? I have had so much fun, but my mother must be looking for me", I said.



Remember the last time you visited? We climbed that big banyan tree in the backyard! In fact, I saw monkeys swinging from the very same tree recently! Ah! What a relief! We had worked so hard convincing our friends in the village not to scare away any animal. The monkeys have returned!

And what did they have in their hands, but blue mangoes! Well, some of them had yellow mangoes but most of them were blue, oh how I craved for the taste of some blue mangoes again.

The monkeys, though behave quite strangely. A lot of times I see them sitting in a huddle with a lot of chattering sound. They seem to be discussing something important in monkey language.



And you know what....! They were all blue - a bright blue. **Have you ever seen blue monkeys?** It must be because they eat all those blue mangoes. I wonder if the water turns blue when they splash about in the stream.

And Yeah!! Do you remember that day when the monkey attacked us thinking we are harming its cute little baby monkey though we were just trying to give it some food. It was so fascinating to see how the baby monkey cuddles its mom under the belly..

Leah

Now it is very hot over here. I can see the birds taking dip in the water of the tank of Nagarhole National Park. But when you will come it will be the rainy season. And ma will keep us indoors all the time.

Getting drenched in a downpour, singing to you and waiting for someone to splash water on.Oh! What fun. The lightening in the sky always scared me, I would usually be filled with fright and the thunder was my woe but looking out of the window from the safety of my house, rain was a marvel. When rain fell softly I would rush out to welcome it.

Sheesh! I don't think I ever want to grow up. Do you remember that time we found the rainbow puddle? Yeah Rainbow puddle. That thought itself makes me nostalgic...Why can't we go back to our childhood days..No tension no worries. We jumped, splashed, hopped, and skipped, slipped and skidded all over the multi-colored puddles! It was so much fun then, but not so much fun at night when maa scolded us for catching a cold!

Just imagine- if that rainbow puddle was like that humongous one in that poem- and we jumped into it...splash...what a huge splash-splash it would be! We always loved doing that didn't we?

And do you remember how we imagined that the rainbow in the puddle could stretch out longer and longer to make a magic road to take us wherever we wanted it to?





Oh, I am getting carried away again! And I need to rush - we are all going for a safari inside the park today followed by a boat ride. Now that I have seen a blue tiger and have eaten blue mangoes, I can't wait to explore this place more. Who knows - I might see 'the enormous' crocodile who will be nice to me and take me for a ride!! And I remember the crocodile who scared me...It was smiling and inviting me to join its water ride...and those monkeys who took magical mangoes from me... light drizzle and beautiful rainbow in the sky...Garam Garam samosas ...right for a relaxing boat ride .This safari is awesome. I am lost in the scenic beauty. It's so nice to be around with so much greenery so soothing to eyes and birds tweeting. Hope I get to see even more when I visit the waters today.

But do you know what is my favorite part of all this? Getting up early in the morning and standing in the porch of our cabin with mom, all wrapped up in the soft blanket and watching the dark shadows disappear as the sun slowly rises. Then there is the music of the forest. What's that? It is the sounds made by the birds that are just waking up in the warmth of their nests like us, and beginning to welcome the new day. **Something we sorely miss in the city!**

The climate today is awesome...Not so hot... Not so cold... Apt one to roam around like this... See that peacock, its dancing... Let me take a snap...Mr. Peacock...

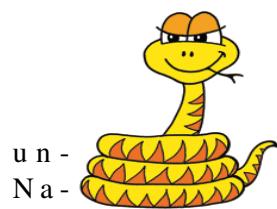
That side the baby elephant... He is playing with his mother... Ooooleeeee ...So cute... He is very naughty, I must say... Simply taking sand and putting on his head...



Oh, but there's so much I am eagerly waiting to tell you about the Nagarhole National Park. Besides the magical blue tiger, I also spotted beautiful black Snakes, the Four-Horned Antelope, Sloth Bear, Porcupine, Jackal, and the tiny Mouse-deer! This trip to Nagarhole National Park will be memorable in so many ways. The different shades of green and the gentle reflection of foliage in the waters, during the boat ride, made all of us silent, as though we were appreciating nature through words of silence... All else was forgotten for a few moments!



When you show you is a pair of eggs that I broken nest Nagarhole from where I am writing to you look cute, and you can feel their warmth when you touch them with your fingers.



come I will something. It small blue found in a der a tree in tional park now. They



That was full fun after so and enjoy the beauty of can visit together and have creams...See the cute birds and

animals dancing and playing around.

long..Great to be with wildlife nature :-) I wish someday we fun...eat lots of ice

And Guess what happened The Next Day The Magical Tiger Came out of the mirror in my room as if It was a Portal It took me back into that forest and I played with the cubs and I had a chance to eat those blue Mangoes available there and I bade Good bye to Everyone there and a Jungle Mobile Magically appeared and Took me to the spot where I entered Then I Jumped through the Mirror and Guess what I had landed in my room.



I was in my room, but something was still holding on to my hand. It kept shaking me as I tried to pull it off. And then, I realized that it was morning and my mother was trying to wake me up. I looked at the window but there was no-one there. Then I realized that it was all a dream and the blue tigers on my night-dress had made me dream of it.

Magical mangoes, blue monkeys and blue tigers and I floating over the trees!! The safari, the jungle, the trees, the birds and animals - and my dreams had my imagination grow wild too! And what about the mangoes? Well, we had been having mangoes every day, so what else could you expect?

Anyway, that was a wonderful dream I had had! I loved every bit of it. We will be posting this letter today, and then we have one more day here. I hope we see a true (blue??!) tiger on the safari today. Maybe I have already seen that particular one in my dream and not realized it.

In fact I am sure that dream is a precursor of what lies ahead...magical mangoes, mysterious monkeys, blue tigers...who knows the elephant safari we are going on might actually have us meet some tiny jungle folk with magical powers people who can call up spirits...spirits of blue tigers...was that what I saw?!





A strange bird was hooting on the tree under which I am sitting. But you know what, when I looked up to see it, I saw the blue face of the blue tiger of my dream smiling broadly like a Cheshire cat ,and it winked at me and said "Hello!".Snap! The sound of a twig breaking beneath my feet and I looked down startled and guess what I saw? Down below a frightened looking cub cowering under ...

Looks like this cub is lost. Time to take him to the forest ranger. So, let me end the letter here. Be sure to preserve this letter....I'm sure it is going to be the longest one you've ever got! Unless, of course, I write you another one with the help of all my wonderful friends! Be sure to send me a very long, juicy reply.

See you soon, bye.

Yours lovingly,

Ritu





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Thank U